FINAL REPORT

Children and Family Service Review

Southeast Service Area

2nd Mini CFSR Review

Period Under Review: April 1st, 2009 – April 5th, 2010

Report Date: May 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Final Report: Children and Family Services Review

(Southeast Service Area – 2nd Mini CFSR Review)

This document presents findings from the 2nd mini Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) for the Southeast Service Area. The Nebraska CQI (Continuous Quality Improvement) team has identified mini CFSR review as an important activity for assessing the performance of each service area and the state as a whole with regard to achieving positive outcomes for children and their families. Mini CFSR reviews are scheduled to take place in each service area once every quarter in year 2010 and 2011.

The Southeast Service area mini CFSR review was conducted on April 27th, 2010 to April 29th, 2010. The period under review for the onsite case review was April 1st, 2009 through April 5th, 2010. The findings were derived from file reviews of 14 cases (8 foster care and 6 in home cases) which were randomly selected from all open child welfare cases at some time during the period under review. The reviews also included interviews with parents, children, foster parents, CFS specialists, and other service providers to assess items 17-20 within the review tool.

Three (3) of the 14 cases were brought to the attention of DHHS for juvenile justice services and four (4) of the cases were non court involved. The cases were from the following Southeast Service Area offices: Lincoln, York, and Wahoo.

The review was completed by staff from DHHS and Out of Home Reform provider KVC. 100% of the cases were reviewed by the following second level reviewers: Micaela Swigle and Sheila Kadoi.

Background Information

The mini CFSR is modeled after the Federal CFSR reviews and assesses the service area's performance on 23 items relevant to seven outcomes.

With regards to outcomes, an overall rating of Strength or Area Needing Improvement (ANI) is assigned to each of the 23 items incorporated in the seven outcomes depending on the percentage of cases that receive a Strength rating in the onsite case review. An item is assigned an overall rating of Strength if 95 percent of the applicable cases reviewed are rated as a strength. Performance ratings for each of the seven outcomes are based on item ratings for each case. A service area may be rated as having "substantially achieved," "partially achieved," or "not achieved" the outcome. The determination of whether a service area is in substantial conformity with a particular outcome is based on the percentage of cases that were determined to have substantially achieved that outcome. In order for a service area to be in substantial conformity with a particular outcome, 95 percent of the cases reviewed must be rated as having substantially achieved the outcome. The standard for substantial conformity is based on the standard set for Federal CFSR. The standards are based on the belief that because child welfare agencies work with our country's most vulnerable children and families, only the highest standards of performance should be acceptable. The focus of the CFSR process is on continuous quality improvement; standards are set high to ensure ongoing attention to the goal of achieving positive outcomes for children and families with regard to safety, permanency, and well-being.

A service area that is not in substantial conformity with a particular outcome must work with their local CQI team to develop and implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address the areas of concern associated with that outcome.

Key CFSR Findings Regarding Outcomes

The 2nd Mini CFSR identified several areas of high performance in Southeast Service Area with regard to achieving desired outcomes for children. The service area achieved substantial conformity in one of the seven CFSR outcomes. One hundred percent (100%) of cases that were applicable for Well-Being Outcome 2, children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs, were rated as Substantially Achieved. Although the service area did not achieve substantial conformity with the other six outcomes, the service area did achieve overall ratings of Strength for the individual indicators pertaining to repeat maltreatment (item 2), foster care re-entry (item 5), stability of foster care placement (item 6), placing children in close proximity to their parents (item 11), and addressing mental/behavioral health needs of the child(ren) (item 23).

The 2nd Mini CFSR review also identified key areas of concern with regard to achieving outcomes for children and families. Concerns were identified with regard to Safety Outcome 2 (children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate), which was substantially achieved in only 57 percent of the cases reviewed. The lowest rating within this outcome was for item 4 (risk assessment and safety management), which was rated as a Strength in 57 percent of the cases reviewed.

Concerns were also identified with regards to Permanency Outcome 1, (children have permanency and stability in their living situations) which was substantially achieved in only 13 percent of the cases reviewed. Within Permanency Outcome 1, Southeast Service area's lowest ratings were for item 8 (reunification, guardianship, and permanent placement with relatives) which was rated as a strength is 43 percent of the cases reviewed and item 9 (adoptions), which was rated as a Strength in 20 percent of the cases reviewed.

In addition, concerns also were identified with regard to Well-Being Outcome 1 (families have enhanced capacity to provide for children's needs), which was substantially achieved in only 21 percent of the cases reviewed. The lowest ratings were for item 18 (child and family involvement in case planning), which was rated as a Strength in 43 percent of the cases reviewed; item 19 (caseworker visits with child), which was rated as a Strength in 43 percent of the cases reviewed; and item 20 (caseworker visits with parent(s)), which was rated as a Strength in only 29 percent of the cases reviewed.

^{*} Figures displayed in the tables within the report may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

KEY FINDINGS RELATED TO OUTCOMES

I. SAFETY

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

Status of Safety Outcome S1

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	8	80%
Partially Achieved:	1	10%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	1	10%
Not Applicable:	4	29%

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Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment

In assessing item 1, reviewers were to determine whether the response to a maltreatment report occurring during the period under review had been initiated in accordance with child welfare agency policy. A new intake tool was implemented in 2003 which is based upon a priority response model with Priority 1 calling for a response by the worker within 24 hours of the time that the report is received by HHS. Priority 2 designated reports are to have face to face contact with the alleged victim by Protection and Safety within 0 to 5 days from the time the intake is received and Priority 3 has a response time of 0-10 days.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 1 was applicable for 10 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 8 (80%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 2 (20%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases)
 - o In all 3 cases, the investigation was initiated in a timely manner and contacts with the child(ren) was/were made in a timely manner according to state policy.
- (5 in home cases)
 - o In all 5 cases, the investigation was initiated in a timely manner and contacts with the child(ren) was/were made in a timely manner according to state policy.

- (1 foster care)
 - o In this one case, contacts with the child(ren) were not made in a timely manner according to state policy and case file documentation did not indicate circumstances that justified the delay.

- (1 in home case)
 - o In this one case, contacts with the child(ren) were not made in a timely manner according to state policy and case file documentation did not indicate circumstances that justified the delay.

Documentation needs to include reasons why contacts with the child(ren) was/were not completed in a timely manner according to state policy.

Item 2: Repeat maltreatment

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether there had been at least one substantiated/inconclusive/petition to be filed maltreatment report during the period under review, and if so, whether another substantiated/inconclusive/petition to be filed report occurred within a 6 month period before or after the report identified. Cases were considered not applicable for assessment if the child or family had never had a maltreatment report.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 2 was applicable for 7 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in all 7(100%) applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 in home cases)
 - o In all three cases, there were no additional <u>substantiated</u> maltreatment reports within a 6 month period before or after the substantiated maltreatment report that was received during the period under review.
- (4 foster care cases)
 - o In all four cases, there were no additional <u>substantiated</u> maltreatment reports within a 6 month period before or after the substantiated maltreatment report that was received during the period under review.

Reviewer Comments:

A Information was readily available to explain the circumstances and findings for any maltreatment reports received within a 6 month period before and after any substantiated maltreatment reports that were received during the period under review.

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Status of Safety Outcome S2

	Total Number	Total Percentage		
Substantially Achieved:	8	57%		
Partially Achieved:	3	21%		
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	21%		
Not Applicable:	0	0%		

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Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal

For this item, reviewers were to assess whether in responding to a substantiated/inconclusive/petition to be filed maltreatment report or risk of harm, the agency made diligent efforts to provide services to families to prevent removal of children from their homes while at the same time ensuring their safety.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 3 was applicable for 13 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 10 (77%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 3 (23%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 in home cases)
 - In all three cases, documentation indicates that in home safety and other services were provided in order to protect the children and prevent their entry into foster care.
- (7 out of home cases)
 - o In one case, in home safety and other services were provided after the child was reunified with the parent(s).
 - o In two of the cases, the child was removed from the home due to their own behaviors and the need for higher level of care identified through YLS and CCAA assessments.
 - o In 4 of the cases, the child(ren) was/were removed from the home due to safety reasons.
 - In two of the cases, the target child was removed from the mother shortly after birth due to safety reasons. In one of the cases, the department was already involved with the family and had been providing services to the mother to address the needs of her older children that were already in foster care. In the other case, the child was born to a mother who was incarcerated and NOT approved for the nursery program in the prison due to her violent behavior.
 - In two other cases, the children were removed from the home due to safety reasons resulting from the parent's neglectful behavior and lack of engagement in services offered by the department to meet their needs.

- (2 in home cases)
 - o In both cases, while the children remained in the home, there were concerns throughout the period under review that the current safety plan was continually being violated. Reviewers were unable to find evidence of an updated safety plan, assessment of needs and modification of services in order to keep the children safe at home. In both instances, the assessment concluded that the children were safe as a result of services that were put in place. While the assessment indicated that the children were safe, the department implemented safety plans which involved the parent(s) as the primary safety plan participants and left in charge of the safety of their children.
- (1 foster care case)
 - o In this one case, the child was reunited with their parent during the period under review and the reviewer was unable to find an updated safety assessment or an updated safety plan to reflect how safety threats were to be managed.

- And other services to enhance parent protective capacities were provided for the parents.
- Safety determination should be made by considering case circumstances absent of department intervention. Safety plans should be implemented in cases in which the children are determined to be unsafe in their current circumstances and without services and intervention from the department.
- Get If there are safety concerns related to the parents, then the parents should not be left in charge of managing safety for their children.

Item 4: Risk assessment and safety management

The assessment of Item 4 required reviewers to determine whether DHHS had made, or was making, diligent efforts to reduce the risk of harm to the children involved in each case. Reviewers rated this item as a Strength if the agency terminated the child's parent's rights as a means of decreasing risk of harm for the child (for example, a termination of parental rights would prevent a child from being returned to a home in which the child would be at risk) and has taken action to minimize other risks to the child (for example, preventing contact with individuals who pose a risk to the child's safety). If a case is/was open for services for a reason other than a court substantiated, inconclusive, petition to be filed or unfounded report of abuse or neglect, or apparent risk of harm to the child(ren) (for example, a juvenile justice case), reviewers were to document this information and rate the item as not applicable. Note, however, that for a child(ren) noted as a "child in need of supervision" or "delinquent", reviewers were to explore and determine whether there was a risk of harm to the child, in addition to the other reasons the case may have been opened, prior to rating it as not applicable. Cases were not applicable for assessment of this item if there was no current or prior risk of harm to the children in the family.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 4 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 8 (57%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 6 (43%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
 - o In all five cases, the file contained enough information to support ongoing risk and safety assessment for the target child while in foster care and his/her siblings that remained in the home. Documentation indicates that risk and safety assessments were formally or informally completed and safety plans adjusted as safety threats increased or decreased.
- (3 in home cases)
 - In all three cases, the file contained enough information to support ongoing risk and safety assessments for the child(ren) while placed in the care of their parents. Documentation indicates that risk and safety assessments were formally or informally completed and safety plans adjusted as safety threats increased or decreased.

- (3 foster care cases)
 - o In all three cases, reviewers were unable to find evidence of ongoing risk and safety assessments. In one of the cases, a safety assessment was not completed prior to the

child being reunified with their parent(s). In two of the cases, the file did not contain an updated safety assessment or an updated safety plan.

• (3 in home cases)

o In all three cases, the reviewers were unable to find any additional formal or informal ongoing safety assessments beyond the initial assessment that resulted in the case opening. Furthermore, there was minimal documentation of contacts between the worker and the children/family and reviewers were unable to determine if an ongoing risk assessment was conducted. In all three cases, there was evidence of safety plan violations, however, the safety plan was not adjusted or updated to ensure safety of the children.

Reviewer Comments:

- Workers need to utilize the Nebraska Safety Intervention System (Safety Model) to assess risk and improve safety interventions with children and families.
- Workers need to continually assess risk and safety during face to face contacts with the child, parent(s) and foster parents. Assessment of risk and safety should be very well documented in the narratives provided for required contacts with the child, parents and foster parents.

II. PERMANENCY

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Status of Permanency Outcome P1

	Total Number	Total Percentage		
Substantially Achieved:	1	13%		
Partially Achieved:	7	88%		
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0%		
Not Applicable:	6	43%		

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Item 5: Foster care re-entries

Reviewers rated this assessment Strength if during the period under review a child did not have an entry into care within a 12-month period from being discharged from another entry into foster care. Reviewers also rated this item as a Strength if a re-entry was an isolated incident during which the agency did what was reasonable to manage the risk following reunification but the child re-entered care for another reason (for example, the death of a parent). Reviewers rated this item as an Area Needing Improvement if re-entries occurring within a 12-month period were due to the same general reasons or same perpetrators. Reviewers rated this item as Not Applicable due to the following reasons: (1) the child entered foster care before, and remained in foster care during, the period under review; or (2) the child entered foster care before, and exited foster care during, the period under review and there was not another entry into foster care during the period under review.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 5 was applicable for 6 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as strength in all 6 (100%) applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (6 foster care cases)
 - o In all six cases, the child did not enter foster care within a 12-month period from being discharged from another entry into foster care. In most instances, the child entered foster care for the first time during the period under review.

Item 6: Stability of foster care placement

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether the child experienced multiple placement changes during the period under review, and if so, whether the changes in placement settings were necessary to achieve the child's permanency goal or meet the child's service needs.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 6 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as strength in all 8 (100%) applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (8 foster care cases)
 - o In two of the cases, the file indicated that the child has experienced only one placement setting and remained in the same foster care placement which was meeting their needs until they were successfully reunited with their parent(s).
 - In three of the cases, the file indicated that the child experienced only one placement setting and remains in the same foster care placement which is currently stable and meeting all of their needs.
 - o In three of the cases, even though the child experienced more than one placement change, these placement changes were necessary in order to provide for the child's treatment needs.

Reviewer Comments:

- *G* Reasons for placement changes were documented in the file.
- A Reviewers were able to determine that the placement changes were in the best interest of the child and necessary to achieve the child's permanency goals and or meet the child's specific needs.

Item 7: Permanency goal for child

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether DHHS had established an appropriate permanency goal for the child in a timely manner, including filing for termination of parental rights when relevant. Reviewers examined the appropriateness of a goal that ultimately rules out adoption, guardianship, or return to family. Reviewers assessed whether the child's best interests were thoroughly considered by DHHS in setting a goal of other planned living arrangement, and that such a decision is /was continually reviewed for ongoing appropriateness. Cases were assigned a rating of Strength for this item when reviewers determined that DHHS had established an appropriate permanency goal in a timely manner. Cases were assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when goals of reunification were not changed in a timely manner when it was apparent that reunification was unlikely to happen, termination of parental rights was not filed when the child had been foster care for 15 of the past 22 months and no compelling reasons were noted in the file, or the goal established for the child was not appropriate. Cases were identified as Not Applicable if the child was not in foster care.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 7 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 5 (63%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 3 (38%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
 - o In all five cases, the child's permanency goals were established in a timely manner, documented in the case file, and were appropriate to the child's needs for permanency. In each instance the child had been in care less than 15 of the most recent 22 months and the case did not meet any ASFA criteria for termination of parental rights.

Areas needing improvement:

- (3 foster care cases)
 - o In all three cases, although the permanency plan of reunification was the appropriate plan for the child's needs and case circumstances, the goal of reunification was not established within 60 days of the child's entry into foster care. In one of these cases, reviewers were unable to determine why a concurrent goal of adoption was established for the child when documentation indicated that the child's father was available and seeking placement of the child. The child was placed with their father 16 days after entering foster care.

Reviewer Comments:

- *G* Permanency goals need to be identified in the case file.
- Get The first permanency goal for the child should be established within 60 days from the child's entry into foster care.
- Gase file documentation needs to reflect any changes in case plan goals.
- A Case file documentation needs to include all information regarding termination of parental rights (TPR) for children who have been in foster care at least 15 out of the most recent 22 months. Documentation should include evidence of petition for TPR and or documentation of compelling reasons for not filing for TPR.

Item 8: Reunification, Guardianship or Permanent Placement with Relatives

In assessing these cases reviewers determined whether DHHS had achieved children's goals of reunification, guardianship or placement with relatives in a timely manner. If the goals had not been achieved in a timely manner reviewers determined whether DHHS had made diligent efforts to achieve the goals.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 8 was applicable for 7 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 3 (43%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 4 (57%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases)
 - o In all three cases, documentation indicated that efforts were made to achieve the child's permanency goal of reunification. In two of these cases, the child had been in foster care less than 12 months and the parents were actively involved in services and working toward reunification. In one of these cases, the child was successfully reunited with their parent and the agency continued to provide services to meet the goal of family preservation.

Areas needing improvement:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - While efforts were being made to achieve the primary goal of reunification in three of the cases, there was no evidence that the agency was addressing the concurrent goal of guardianship that had been established for the child.
 - o In one of the cases, the child has been in out of home care for longer than 12 months and while there was a concurrent goal of adoption established for the child, there was no documentation of efforts to achieve the goal of adoption.

Reviewer Comments:

- Governmentation should clearly explain the agency's efforts in achieving <u>ALL</u> permanency goals established for the child.
- Get If the child has been in foster care for longer than 12 months, documentation should also include information regarding barriers or particular circumstances to justify the delay in achieving the child's permanency goal.
- Get The agency should be making active efforts to achieve <u>ALL</u> permanency goals (primary and concurrent goals) established for the child. Reviewers had a difficult time finding information to support agency's efforts to achieve <u>concurrent</u> goals that were established.

Item 9: Adoption

In assessing this item, reviewers were to determine whether appropriate and timely efforts (within 24 months of the most recent entry into foster care) had been or were being made to achieve finalized adoption.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 9 was applicable for 5 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 1 (20%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 4 (80%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (1 foster care case)
 - Concerted efforts were made to achieve the child's concurrent goal of adoption.
 The department accepted relinquishments from both parents four months after the child was born and placed in foster care.

Areas needing improvement:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - In all four cases, there was a concurrent goal of adoption established at the same time that the primary goal of reunification was established for the child. However, there was no evidence in the file to support that the concurrent goal of adoption was being addressed by the agency.

Reviewer Comments:

- Get Documentation should clearly explain the agency's efforts to achieve ALL permanency goals established for the child.
- Get If the child has been in foster care for longer than 12 months, documentation should also include information regarding barriers or particular circumstances to justify the delay in achieving the child's permanency goal.

Get If the permanency goal of adoption was not achieved in 24 months or is not likely to be achieved in 24 months of the date of the child's most recent entry into foster care, then the documentation in the file should include particular circumstances that warrant the delay.

Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement

Reviewers determined whether the agency had made or was making diligent efforts to assist children in attaining their goals related to other planned permanent living arrangements (Independent Living, Self-Sufficiency or Family Preservation).

Review Findings: The assessment of item 10 was not applicable for all 14 cases. None of the cases involved a permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement.

Status of Permanency Outcome P2

	Total Number	Total Percentage		
Substantially Achieved:	4	50%		
Partially Achieved:	4	50%		
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0%		
Not Applicable:	6	43%		

^{*} Figures displayed in the table may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement

Reviewers were to determine whether the child's foster care setting was in close proximity to the child's parents or close relatives. Cases determined to be not applicable were those in which termination of parental rights had been completed prior to the period under review, or in which contact with parents was not considered to be in the child's best interest.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 11 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in all 8 (100%) applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (8 foster care cases)
 - o In six of the cases, the child was placed in the same community as their parent(s).
 - o In two of the cases the child was placed in a treatment facility approximately 1 hour away from the parent(s). Documentation indicated that the parents were involved with the child's treatment and had frequent contacts with the child during the period under review.

Reviewer Comments:

Documentation should include information regarding location of foster care placement and its proximity to the parent(s).

Item 12: Placement with siblings

Reviewers were to determine whether siblings were or had been placed together and if not, was separation necessary to meet the needs (service or safety needs) of one or more of the children.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 12 was applicable for 3 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 2 (67%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 1 (33%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (2 foster care cases)
 - o In both cases, the child was placed in the same foster care with his/her siblings during the period under review.

Areas needing improvement:

- (1 foster care case)
 - o There was no documentation in the file to explain why the siblings were not placed together or indication that the agency tried to place all the siblings together.

Reviewer Comments:

Get Documentation should explain the agency's efforts to place all siblings together and address the circumstances or reasons for not placing all siblings together.

Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care

In assessing this item reviewers determined whether DHHS had or was making diligent efforts to facilitate visitations between children in foster care and their parents and siblings. Reviewers also determined whether these visits typically occurred with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the children and families. Non applicable cases were those where the child had no siblings in foster care, if the parents could not be located, and/or if visitation with the parents was considered not in the best interests of the child. Reviewers rated this item for the period under review based on the individual needs of the child and family, rather than on the DHHS policy regarding visitation. The DHHS visitation guidebook recommends a minimum of one visit every two weeks between child and parent unless it would not be in the child's best interest because the parent is the perpetrator of sever physical abuse or sexual abuse. DHHS Policy requires that siblings placed separately must have a minimum of one visit per month. Other forms of communication including phone calls and letters are strongly encouraged.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 13 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 4 (50%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 4 (50%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - O Documentation in all four cases indicated that the frequency and quality of the visits were sufficient to promote continuity of parent child relationships. In these instances, the child was either placed in the same foster home with their sibling or did not have any other siblings in foster care.

- (4 foster care cases)
 - o In three of the cases, the reviewers were unable to find any documentation of active efforts to locate and involve the father in visitations with their child. Reviewers were also unable to determine the frequency and quality of visitations between the child and their mother in one of these cases due to lack of a visitation plan and documentation regarding visits between the child and their mother.

o In one case, the reviewers were able to find a visitation plan on file, however, there was no documentation found regarding actual frequency and quality of visitations between the child and their parents.

Reviewer Comments:

- Documentation should explain the frequency of visits between the child and his/her parents (mother and/or father when applicable) and the child and his or her siblings if the child has a sibling who is also in foster care but is in a different placement.
- Get Documentation should explain the quality of visits between the child and his/her parents (mother and/or father when applicable) and the child and his or her siblings if the child has a sibling who is also in foster care but is in a different placement. Documentation should address how the quality of the visit was sufficient to maintain continuity of relationships.

Item 14: Preserving connections

Reviewers determined whether DHHS had or was making diligent efforts to preserve the child's primary connection and characteristics while in foster care. Reviewers had to make a professional judgment about the child's primary connections and then explore whether those connections have been preserved through case planning and service delivery.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 14 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 5 (63%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 3 (38%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
 - o In all five cases, the files contained documentation of efforts made by the department to maintain the child's connections to his community, faith, extended family, friends, tribe and any other connections important to the child.

Areas needing improvement:

- (3 foster care cases)
 - o In one of the cases, the reviewers were unable to find documentation regarding efforts to preserve the child's relationship with extended family. The reviewers were also unable to find efforts to notify the tribe even though documentation indicates that the child may be eligible for membership with a specific tribe.
 - o In two other cases, the reviewers were unable to find efforts to maintain the child's important connections (i.e. school and community involvement).

Reviewer Comments:

- Documentation needs to include the child's important connections and efforts made by the department to preserve those connections.
- Documentation should include information to support that sufficient inquiry was conducted with <u>both</u> mother and father and relatives to determine whether or not the child may be a member of or eligible for membership in an Indian tribe.

Item 15: Relative placement

Reviewers had to focus on the title IV-E provision that requires States to consider giving preference to placing the child with relatives, and determine whether the State considered such a placement and how (for example, seeking out and evaluating the child's relatives). Relatives include non-custodial parents, such as fathers not in the home, if applicable to the case. Reviewers had to determine the

extent to which the agency identified relatives who had some reasonable degree of relationship with the child and with whom the child might reside. There did not need to be in the case record a formal evaluation of relatives with whom the child might reside, but for reviewers to have answered "yes" evidence must exist, through either the case documentation or the case interviews, that relatives were evaluated and considered. Reviewers rated this item as a Strength if (1) the agency assessed the child's needs and determined that he/she required special services and (2) the agency assessed potential relative placements and determined that the relative placements did not have the capacity to meet the child's needs. Reviewers rated this item as a Strength unless no efforts were made to locate or identify relatives for placement, or placement with a family known to the child. Reviewers rated this item as not applicable if (1) the agency determined upon the child's initial entry into care that his/her needs required residential treatment services and a relative placement would be inappropriate, or (2) if relatives were unable to be identified despite the agency's diligent efforts to do so, or in situations such as abandonment in which the identity of the parents and relatives remains unknown despite efforts to identify them. Reviewers were to check not applicable if the child was placed with relatives.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 15 was applicable for 6 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 4 (67%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 2 (33%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - o Documentation supports that the child was placed with a relative in two of the cases.
 - o In one case, the child's maternal relatives were determined to be inappropriate placements for the child. The child entered foster care in May of 2009 and paternity was not established until January of 2010 at which time, the department began ICPC process in order to place the child with her biological father who lived out of state.
 - o In one other case, the maternal relatives were determined to be inappropriate placements for the child. The department is currently working with the child's paternal grandmother to obtain a larger residence in order to accommodate the child and her siblings.

Areas needing improvement:

- (2 foster care cases)
 - o In one of the cases, there was documentation to support that maternal relatives were identified. However, there was no documentation in the file to explain why the child was not placed with relatives.
 - o In the other case, there was no documentation to support the agency's efforts to identify the child's maternal and paternal relatives.

Reviewer Comments:

- Documentation should clearly indicate the agency's efforts to identify, locate and evaluate maternal and/or paternal relatives as potential placements for the child.
- A If the child is not placed with relatives, the documentation should include the reason for not placing the child with relatives (i.e. relatives were unwilling to provide placement, relatives were ruled out or determined to be inappropriate placement options for the child etc.)

Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents

In assessing this item, reviewers determined if there was evidence of a strong, emotionally supportive relationship between the child in foster care and the child's parents during the period under review. Reviewers assigned a rating of Strength for this item when there was evidence of regular visitation

between parent and child. Reviewers assigned a rating of Area Needing Improvement when they determined the agency had not made diligent efforts to support the child's relationship with the father or mother. A case was considered not applicable if a relationship with the child's parents was contrary to the child's safety or best interest during the period under review.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 16 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 4 (50%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 4 (50%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - o In all four cases, documentation supports that efforts were made to support and maintain a positive and nurturing relationship between the child in foster care and their mother and/or father.

Areas needing improvement:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - o In one of the cases, there was no documentation regarding any attempts to support and maintain a positive relationship between the child and his parents (mother and father).
 - o In three of the cases, there was no documentation regarding any attempts to support and maintain a positive relationship between the child and his/her father.

Reviewer Comments:

- Documentation should indicate the agency's efforts to provide opportunities or support additional activities to help support, strengthen, or maintain parent-child relationships. Documentation should address mother and/or father's relationships as determined applicable due to case circumstances.
- The additional activities referenced here are those outside of planned visitation between parent and child and would include the following:
 - Parent participation in the child's school activities, attendance at doctor's appointments, engagement in after school or extracurricular activities.
 - Agency efforts to arrange for or provide transportation for the parent to attend activities mentioned above.
 - Opportunities for therapeutic situations to strengthen parent child relationships.
 - Encourage foster parents to provide mentoring or serve as a role model to parents.

III. WELL-BEING

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB1

	Total Number	Total Percentage		
Substantially Achieved:	3	21%		
Partially Achieved:	8	57%		
Not Achieved or Addressed:	3	21%		
Not Applicable:	0	0%		

^{*} Figures displayed in the table may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

In assessing item 17, reviewers were to determine whether DHHS adequately assessed the needs of children, parents and foster parents AND provided the services to meet those needs. Reviewers rated item 17 as a strength if (1) a needs assessment was conducted for the child(ren), parents, and foster parents, and (2) appropriate services were provided in relation to the identified needs of the target child in foster care cases, or for all children in in-home cases. Education and physical or mental health services to the target child were not rated for this item (these are rated in items 21, 22, and 23). Reviewers had to document whether these services were provided to parents.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 17 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 8 (57%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 6 (43%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (4 foster care cases)
 - In these four foster care cases, there were concerted efforts to assess the needs of the target child, foster parents and parents (mother and father when applicable) and appropriate services were implemented to address all identified needs.
- (4 in home cases)
 - In these four in-home cases, there were concerted efforts to assess the needs of all children living in the home as well as the parents (mother and father when applicable) and appropriate services were implemented to address all identified needs.

- (4 foster care cases)
 - o In three of the cases, the reviewers were unable to find information to support that the needs of the child's father were assessed or identified. In general reviewers were unable to find documentation to support the agency's efforts to locate and/or involve the father in all three cases.
 - o In one of the cases, the reviewers were unable to find information to support that the needs of the foster parent were assessed or identified.

- (2 in home cases)
 - o In both cases, the department made efforts to assess and provide services to meet the children's needs. However, documentation indicated a lack of effort in assessing and providing the needs of the parents (mother and/or father when applicable).

- Documentation should include detailed information of the agency's efforts to achieve an in depth understanding of the needs of the child and family regardless of whether needs were assessed in a formal or informal manner.
- *Get* It is not enough to simply note that an assessment was completed, it is important that enough information is documented regarding adequacy of the assessment.
- *G* Needs should be clearly identified and documented.
- *G* Services should be clearly identified and should match identified needs.

Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning

In assessing this item reviewers were to determine whether the agency actively involved the parent(s), guardian, child(ren) and other people identified by the family in the case planning activities relevant to the current case plan. A determination of involvement in case planning required that a parent (guardian) and the child (older than 8 and not incapacitated) had actively participated in identifying the services and goals for the case plan.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 18 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 6 (43%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 8 (57%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (4 foster care case)
 - o In all four cases, the reviewers determined that when applicable the mother, father and target child were actively involved in the development and evaluation of case plan goals.
- (2 in home cases)
 - o In both in-home cases, the reviewers determined that both the mother and father were actively involved in the development and evaluation of case plan goals. The children were too young to be involved in the case planning process.

- (4 foster care case)
 - o In one of the cases, reviewers were unable to determine the level of involvement by the mother in the development and evaluation of case plan goals.
 - In three of the cases, reviewers were unable to find documentation of any efforts to involve the child's biological father in the development and evaluation of case plan goals.
- (4 in home cases)
 - o In two of the in-home cases, there was no evidence of the father's involvement in the development and evaluation of case plan goals.
 - o In two of the cases, there was minimal documentation of family team meetings and reviewers were unable to find information to support ongoing and active involvement by the parents in the development and evaluation of case plan goals.

- Documentation and interviews should clearly identify the extent to which the child (if developmentally appropriate) was involved in determining: (1) his or her strengths and needs, (2) the type and level of services needed, (3) and his or her goals and progress towards them.
- Documentation and interviewers should clearly identify the extent to which the parents (mother and/or father) whenever appropriate/applicable were involved in (1) identifying strengths and needs, (2) identifying services and service providers, (3) establishing case plan goals, (4) evaluating progress toward goals, and (5) discussing the case plan in case planning meetings.

Item 19: Worker visits with child

Reviewers were to determine the typical pattern of visits between the worker and child and if these visits were sufficient to ensure adequate monitoring of the child's safety and well being. Reviewers were also to determine whether visits focused on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and achievement of the goals.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 19 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 6 (43%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 8 (57%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
 - o In all five cases, the frequency and quality of visits between the caseworker and the target child were sufficient to ensure safety, permanency and wellbeing of the child and achieve case plan goals.
- (1 in home case)
 - o In the one in-home case, the worker had face to face contacts with all of the children living in the home. The frequency and quality of visits between the caseworker and each child were sufficient to ensure safety, permanency and wellbeing of the children and achieve case plan goals.

- (3 foster care cases)
 - o In all three cases, the typical pattern of visitation between the caseworker and the target child was less than once a month. In all three cases, the reviewers were unable to determine the quality of visits due to lack of information in the file and during the interviews.
- (5 in home cases)
 - o In all five cases, the reviewers determined that the typical pattern of visitation between the worker and the child(ren) was less than once a month. Furthermore, the reviewers were unable to determine from case documentation if the quality of the visits with the child(ren) were sufficient to ensure safety, permanency, wellbeing and achieve case plan goals.
 - In three of these cases, the current caseworker was recently assigned the case and was unable to provide more information regarding lack of contact with the children prior to the worker taking over the case.
 - In one of the cases, the mother confirmed the lack of contact between the worker and the child during the period under review.

- Documentation should address the frequency of worker's visits with the child. If the face to face contact between the worker and the child was less than once a month, the documentation should include reasons why the face to face contact between the worker and child did not occur.
- Documentation should include enough information to determine that the quality of the visit between the worker and the child were sufficient to address issues pertaining to safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case plan goals. It is important to document length of visit, location of visit and items that were discussed during the visits.

Item 20: Worker visits with parents

Reviewers were to assess whether the caseworker had sufficient face to face contact with parents to encourage attainment of their children's permanency goal while ensuring safety and well being. Cases were not applicable for this item if parental rights had been terminated prior to the period under review and parents were no longer involved in the lives of the children.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 20 was applicable for all 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 4 (29%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 10 (71%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (3 foster care cases)
 - o In all three cases there was evidence that the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the parents (mother and/or father) of the child(ren) were sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case plan goals.
- (1 in home case)
 - o In this one case, there was evidence that the frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the parents (mother and/or father) were sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case plan goals.

- (5 foster cases)
 - o In two of the cases, documentation in the file and interviews with the parent(s) indicated that the frequency of visits were less than once a month and the quality of the visits were not sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case plan goals.
 - In three of the cases, there was no documentation of efforts to locate or meet with the child's father during the period under review. In two of these cases the frequency and quality of the contacts between the worker and the child's mother was not sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case plan goals.
- (5 in home cases)
 - In all five cases, documentation in the file indicated that the frequency of visits between the caseworker and the child(ren)'s mother and/or father was less than once a month and the quality of visits were not sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and promote achievement of case goals.

• In three of these cases, the current caseworker was recently assigned the case and was unable to provide more information regarding lack of contact with the parents prior to the worker taking over the case.

Reviewer Comments:

- Documentation should clearly address the frequency of worker's visits with the parents (mother and/or father) as determined to be applicable and appropriate. If the face to face contact between the worker and the parent was less than once a month, the documentation should include reasons why the face to face contact between the worker and parent did not occur.
 - ➤ If the reason for lack of contact with the parent is due to the parent's whereabouts being unknown, the file needs to include enough information regarding the departments efforts to locate and involve the parent.
- 6 Documentation should include enough information to determine that the quality of the visit between the worker and the parent were sufficient to address issues pertaining to safety, permanency, and well-being of the child and promote achievement of case plan goals. It is important to document the length of visit, location of visit and items that were discussed during the visits.

Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2

	Total Number	Total Percentage		
Substantially Achieved:	8	100%		
Partially Achieved:	0	0%		
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	0%		
Not Applicable:	6	43%		

^{*} Figures displayed in the table may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

Item 21: Educational needs of the child

When addressing educational issues for families receiving in-home services, reviewers considered whether the educational needs are/were relevant to the reason why the agency is/was involved with the family, and whether the need to address educational issues is/was a reasonable expectation given the circumstances of the agency's involvement with the family. (If not, reviewers rated item 21 as not applicable.) Reviewers rated this item as a Strength if (1) the agency made extensive efforts to address the child's educational needs and the school system was unresponsive, especially if the problems are with a local school or jurisdiction; (2) if the child(ren)'s educational needs were assessed and addressed, including cases where the educational records were missing and the reasons why; or (3) if the agency conducted an assessment of educational issues and determined that there were no problems in that area, nor any need for educational services.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 21 was applicable for 8 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in all 8 (100%) applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care and 3 in home cases)
 - o In all eight cases, there was evidence that the child(ren)'s current educational needs were assessed and services were provided to meet identified needs.

Get Documentation addressed the agency's efforts to assess the child's educational needs and provide services to meet those needs.

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs. Status of Well-Being Outcome WB3;

	Total Number	Total Percentage
Substantially Achieved:	8	62%
Partially Achieved:	3	23%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	2	15%
Not Applicable:	1	7%

^{*} Figures displayed in the table may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

Item 22: Physical health of the child

When addressing health issues for families receiving in-home services, reviewers considered whether the physical health needs are/were relevant to the reason why the agency is/was involved with the family and whether the need to address physical health issues is/was a reasonable expectation given the circumstances of the agency's involvement with the family. (If not, reviewers rated this item as not applicable.) For example, if a child became known to the agency and was determined to be in need of in-home services at least partly as a result of physical abuse or sexual abuse, then it is reasonable to expect the agency to provide services to ensure that the child receives the appropriate physical health services. Reviewers rated this item as a Strength if the agency conducted an assessment of physical health and determined that there were no problems in that area, nor any need for physical health services.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 22 was applicable for 11 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in 6 (55%) of the applicable cases and rated as an area needing improvement in 5 (45%) of the applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
 - In all five cases, the documentation indicated that the agency conducted an assessment of the target child's physical and dental health needs and provided appropriate services to meet all identified needs.
- (1 in home cases)
 - o In this one in home case, there was documentation to support that the agency conducted an assessment of all of the child(ren)'s physical and dental health needs and provided appropriate services to meet identified needs.

- (3 foster care cases)
 - In these three cases, the reviewers were unable to find documentation of an assessment of the target child's dental health needs. In one of these cases, there was also no documentation of an assessment of the target child's physical health needs.

- (2 in home cases)
 - o In these two cases, reviewers were unable to find documentation of assessments of the child(ren)'s physical and dental health care needs.

- Get Documentation should address the agency's efforts to assess the child's physical and dental health needs.
- Documentation should indicate the agency's efforts to address the child's physical and dental health needs as identified in the assessment. It is not enough to simply state the date of the examinations. Documentation should include the results of both physical and dental examinations and services that were provided to meet the needs that were identified during those examinations.

Item 23: Mental health of the child

Reviewers were to determine whether during the period under review, (1) mental health needs had been appropriately assessed, and (2) appropriate services to address those needs had been offered or provided. Reviewers rated this item as a strength if the agency conducted an assessment of the child's mental health and determined that there were no mental health needs or that appropriate services were provided to meet all identified mental health needs. Cases were not applicable if the child was too young for an assessment of mental health needs or if the reviewer determined that there was no reason to expect that, during the period under review, the agency would address mental/behavioral health issues for the child(ren), given the circumstances of the case.

Review Findings: The assessment of item 23 was applicable for 9 of the 14 cases. This item was rated as a strength in all 9 (100%) applicable cases.

Strengths:

- (5 foster care cases)
 - o In all five cases, the documentation indicated that the agency conducted an assessment of the target child's mental health and provided appropriate services to meet all of the child's identified mental/behavioral health needs.
- (4 in home cases)
 - In all four cases, the documentation indicated that the agency conducted assessments of the child(ren)'s mental/behavioral health and provided appropriate services to meet all of the child(ren)'s identified mental/behavioral health needs.

Reviewer Comments:

- Documentation clearly addresses the agency's efforts to assess the child's mental/behavioral health needs.
- Documentation identified the child's needs and indicated the agency's efforts to address the child's mental/behavioral needs as identified in the assessment.

Southeast Service Area CFSR Review - Results Table:

Review Period: *April* 1st 2009 – *April* 5th 2010 **Number of Reviews**: 14 cases (8 Foster Care, 6 In Home)

PERFORMANCE ITEM RESULTS

* Figures displayed may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

	igures dispiayed may not total 100 percent due t		em Ratings	(#)	Item Ratings (%)		
	Performance Item		ANI	N/A	S	ANI	N/A
Item 1:	Timeliness of initiating investigations	8	2	4	80%	20%	29%
Item 2:	Repeat maltreatment	7	0	7	100%	0%	50%
Item 3:	Services to family	10	3	1	77%	23%	7%
Item 4:	Risk assessment and safety management	8	6	0	57%	43%	0%
Item 5:	Foster care re-entries	6	0	8	100%	0%	57%
Item 6:	Stability of foster care placement	8	0	6	100%	0%	43%
Item 7:	Permanency goal for child	5	3	6	63%	38%	43%
Item 8:	Reunification, guardianship etc	3	4	7	43%	57%	50%
Item 9:	Adoption	1	4	9	20%	80%	64%
Item 10:	Other planned permanent living arrangement	0	0	14	NA	NA	100%
Item 11:	Proximity of foster care placement	8	0	6	100%	0%	43%
Item 12:	Placement with siblings	2	1	11	67%	33%	79%
Item 13:	Visiting with parents and siblings	4	4	6	50%	50%	43%
Item 14:	Preserving connections	5	3	6	63%	38%	43%
Item 15:	Relative placement	4	2	8	67%	33%	57%
Item 16:	Relationship of child in care with parents	4	4	6	50%	50%	43%
Item 17:	Needs and services	8	6	0	57%	43%	0%
Item 18:	Child and family involvement in case planning	6	8	0	43%	57%	0%
Item 19:	Caseworker visits with child	6	8	0	43%	57%	0%
Item 20:	Caseworker visits with parent(s)	4	10	0	29%	71%	0%
Item 21:	Educational needs of the child	8	0	6	100%	0%	43%
Item 22:	Physical health of the child	6	5	3	55%	45%	21%
Item 23:	Mental/behavioral health of the child	9	0	5	100%	0%	36%

OUTCOME RESULTS

* 95 % is the target goal for each outcome.

	COUNTS (#)				PERCENTAGES (%)			
Performance Outcome	SA	PA	NACH	N/A	SA	PA	NACH	N/A
Safety 1 (Items 1-2)	8	1	1	4	80%	10%	10%	29%
Safety 2 (Items 3-4)	8	3	3	0	57%	21%	21%	0%
Permanency 1 (Items 5-10)	1	7	0	6	13%	88%	0%	43%
Permanency 2 (Items 11-16)	4	4	0	6	50%	50%	0%	43%
Wellbeing 1 (Items 17-20)	3	8	3	0	21%	57%	21%	0%
Wellbeing 2 (Item 21)	8	0	0	6	100%	0%	0%	43%
Wellbeing 3 (Items 22-23)	8	3	2	1	62%	23%	15%	7%

KEY:

 $\overline{N/A} = Not Applicable$

S = Strength

PA = Partially Achieved SA = Substantially Achieved NACH = Not Achieved

ANI = Area Needing Improvement